

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15716

FROM VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 11652 GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, VT  
SUBJECT: CONCLAVE 1978; PAPAL SUCCESSION POLITICS,  
II. AS SEEN THROUGH ITALIAN LENS

REF: A) ROME 15201 B) 15715

1. ON AUGUST 23 THE LEFTIST NEWSPAPER, LA REPUBBLICA,  
PUBLISHED IN ITS FRONT PAGE AN INTERNAL REPORT OF THE ITALIAN  
EMBASSY TO THE HOLY SEE. WHILE THE LEAK PROVED EXTREMELY

EMBARRASSING TO THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, THE REPORT PROVIDES  
A SYNTHESIS OF THE PRE-CONCLAVE TRENDS AS SEEN THROUGH THE  
LENS OF THE ROMAN CURIA, PARTICULARLY ITS ITALIAN COMPONENT.  
SINCE IT HAS ENGENDERED MUCH COMMENT AT THE VATICAN AND IN ROME,  
A SUMMARY OF IT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT.

2. THE REPORT'S PRINCIPAL CONCLUSION IS THAT THE NEXT  
POPE WILL MOST PROBABLY BE AN ITALIAN: "ITALIANS, IN FACT,"  
ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, "BECAUSE OF THEIR FLEXIBILITY,  
KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMPLEX MACHINERY, AND THEIR ABILITY TO SHED  
NATIONALISTIC ATTITUDES, APPEAR PREFERRED ALSO BY POWERFUL  
EUROPEAN CHURCHES, SUCH AS THE FRENCH ONE."

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3. THE REPORT GOES ON TO CHARACTERIZE THE STRENGTHS AND  
WEAKNESSES OF THE THREE CARDINALS MENTIONED MOST FREQUENTLY  
IN THE CURIA - BERTOLI, BAGGIO, AND BENELLI, WHICH APPEARS TO DO NO  
DAMAGE TO THEIR REPUTATIONS. THE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF SOME  
OTHER CARDINALS, HOWEVER, STRESS WEAKNESSES WHICH HERTOFORE  
WERE NOT WIDELY DISSEMINATED: ACCORDING TO THE REPORT:

A) PIGNEDOLI IS LIMITED BY HIS LACK OF "STATURE" THEOLOGICALLY AND HIS "PASTICCIO" (SLIPS) IN TRIPOLI WHEN QUADAFFI PULLED A FAST ONE BY INTRODUCING INTO A JOINT COMMUNIQUE SOME PARQGRAPHS WITH REGARD TO ISRAEL WHICH WERE CONTRARY TO VATICAN POLICY AND HAD TO BE WITHDRAWN;

B) POLETTI, THE VICAR OF ROME, IS CHARACTERIZED AS OF "LIMITED WORTH" AND LACKING IN EXPERIENCE;

C) FELICE IS CHARACTERIZED AS "EXCESSIVELY CONSERVATIVE".

D) PAPPALARDO OF PALERMO IS EXCLUDED BECAUSE OF HIS "YOUTH" AND "STYLE";

E) VILLOT, THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND CURRENTLY CAMERLENGO, IS CHARACTERIZED AS PHYSICALLY WEAK AND AS LACKING IN THE "NECESSARY QUALITIES" WHICH THE HIGH POST DEMANDS;

F) PIRONIO, IS LIMITED BECAUSE HE IS NOT SUFFICIENT CALIBRE" AND HIS EXPERIENCE IS LIMITED TO LATIN AMERICAN;

G) GANTIN, THE ONLY AFRICAN CARDINAL WHOSE NAME HAD BEEN MENTIONED EARLY IN THE PRE CONCLAVE PERIOD, IS DESCRIBED AS HAVING DEMONSTRATED "HIS LIMITATIONS" DURING HIS ROME STAY, AND AS NOT CAPABLE OF GUIDING CHURCH;

H) WILLENBRANDS, IS CONSIDERED BY MANY AS EXCESSIVELY PROGRESSIVE AND AS LACKING IN QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE HIGH POST."

4. COMMENT: ASIDE FROM THE UNFORTUNATE EMBARRASSMENT IT HAS CAUSED TO ITS AUTHOR, THE REPORT DOES IN FACT REFLECT CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MOOD OF THE ITALIAN COMPONENT OF THE ROMAN CURIA AND PERHAPS THE CONSENSUS OF MOST CLOSE OBSERVERS OF THE VATICAN. WHILE THE WEIGHT WHICH THE OPINION OR MOOD OF THE ROMAN CURIA IS STILL TO BE VERIFIED BY THE CONCRETE ACTION OF THE CONCLAVE, IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT MOST VATICAN OBSERVERS ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE 263RD POPE WILL MOST LIKELY BE ITALIAN. THE KEY REASONS ADDUCED FOR THIS ARE FOUR:

- THE CURIA, THOUGH INTERNATIONALIZED, IS STILL DOMINATED, AND ITS COMPLEX MACHINE RUN, BY ITALIAN PERSONALITIES;
- IMPORTANT VATICAN RELATIONSHIPS (THE CONCORDAT) WITH ITALY ARE STILL PENDING CLARIFICATION;
- TRADITION PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE CHURCH AND IS NOT LIKELY TO BE TOPPLED LIGHTLY DESPITE THE TRULY INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS WHICH PRESENTLY REPRESENTS SOME FIFTY NATIONALITIES, ALL FIVE CONTINENTS AND ALL THE PRINCIPAL RACES; AND, FINALLY,
- THE LAST TWO POPES - BOTH ITALIAN - HAVE DEMONSTRATED THROUGH THE AGGIORNAMENTO "UPDATING"OF THE CHURCH'S WORLD VIEW THAT THEY WERE NOT INSENSITIVE TO NON-

ITALIAN CURRENTS OF THOUGHT. HOLMES

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## Message Attributes

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